SUCCESS STORY
Roads Connect Rural Communities

Road construction links rural communities to government services and local leaders

Local Governance and Community Development staff conduct a final assessment of Bakwa's new roads.

Photo: USAID/LGCD

A new rural road improves access to main roads in the unstable Bakwa District of Farah Province, paving the way for community-led development and demonstrating the government's ability to respond to community needs.

Located on the border of one of Afghanistan's most insecure areas, Bakwa District in Farah Province has seen little development aid. Coalition Forces and USAID have identified Bakwa as an area in need of stability initiatives because insurgents are using it as a safe area. In response to this need, USAID's Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD) project worked with the local community to implement a small-scale community roads project. This has connected Bakwa residents with government-delivered services, demonstrating the government's ability to respond to their needs.

In March 2010, LGCD field staff facilitated a meeting between the Bakwa District Governor, the District Development Assembly, and community leaders to identify possible stabilization projects. Following continued discussions, LGCD awarded nine community stabilization grants totaling nearly $85,000. The grants allowed communities throughout the district to level and surface approximately 15 km of roads leading from rural towns to the main "Ring Road," that passes through the center of Bakwa District and connects every major city in Afghanistan. These projects provided 228 residents with temporary employment, and local residents contributed labor, additional materials, and equipment. As part of a larger portfolio of projects for Bakwa District, these grants helped to build relationships between the communities and their local government.

The improved access to main roads also enhanced access to markets, paving the way for economic development. "During the planting and rainy season, the way was inaccessible for cars and we had trouble getting to the city and reaching health services before the road improvements," remarked Mullah Habibullah, head of the Kanaka Community Development Committee. "Now, in addition to the connection to the main road to Farah City, we are better connected to the other towns around us."

As USAID's flagship stabilization effort, LGCD engages communities in unstable areas to take an active role in their own security and addresses priority grievances of at-risk populations through integrated community development activities.